

N.I.B. BULLETINS.
No. 8.

REPORT
ON
SIGHTED LABOUR
IN
WORKSHOPS
FOR THE BLIND

Price 6d.

Published by the
NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR THE BLIND
(Registered under the *Blind Persons Act, 1920*)
224-6-8, Great Portland Street, London, W.1

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AMERICAN FOUNDATION FOR THE BLIND
15 WEST 16TH STREET
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Sighted Labour in Workshops for the Blind.

1.—In January, 1933, the Association of Workshops for the Blind was asked by the National Institute for the Blind to investigate the question of the Employment of Sighted Labour in Workshops for the Blind and to make a report, and, if possible, a recommendation as to the proportion of sighted labour which appeared to give the most satisfactory results, having regard to all the circumstances.

2.—It was fully realised at the start that it would be extremely difficult to make any such recommendation, partly on account of the different conditions prevailing in different workshops, and partly because the policy and methods of institutions were known to vary widely. For example, not only does the expression "Gross Profit" mean one thing to one workshop and something quite different to another, by reason of the different methods of accounting, but the aims of the same two workshops may be entirely different, in that one may be endeavouring to conduct its workshop as efficiently as possible, and may employ only workers who are capable of a high standard of output, and the other may aim at providing occupation for as many blind persons as possible—regardless of their capacity—and may make very little effort to run the workshop upon commercial lines.

3.—In spite of the variable nature of the policies existing in various institutions, there are certain outstanding factors which must not be lost sight of when measuring the commercial success of a workshop.

These are :—

- (a) Average earnings when fully employed ;
- (b) Average output per head of each blind worker ;
- (c) Gross profit or loss ;

and it was considered that these factors must constitute the basis of any investigation into the subject under review.

It was decided, therefore, to utilise results obtained under these headings as a means of determining the relative standing of each institution on the industrial side, and to study the proportion of sighted to blind labour in those workshops which appeared to make the best returns.

4.—Accordingly, 31 workshops for the blind were visited, and the manager of each interviewed. The information obtained was tabulated by departments as shewn in Appendix I and an “Order of Merit” allotted to each workshop in respect of the above factors. Thus, the institution whose workers received the highest average wage in any particular department was allotted number 1 in the “Average Wages” Order of Merit Column (Column 6, Appendix I) ; the institution in which the output per head per blind worker was highest was allotted number 1 in the “Output per Head” Order of Merit Column (Column 7, Appendix I) ; the institution showing the highest gross profit was allotted number 1 in the “Gross Profit or Loss” Order of Merit Column (Column 8, Appendix I); and so on down the scale. Orders of Merit in these three columns were then totalled, and a combined Order of Merit obtained as shown in Column 9, Appendix I.

5.—Analysis of the figures reveal the fact that institutions employing a relatively large amount of sighted labour in a department are usually the institutions which appear high up in the “ Combined Order of Merit ” Column (Column 9) ; whereas those employing a smaller proportion of sighted assistance occupy lower positions in the same column.

6.—It should be observed that Column 9 (the “ Combined Order of Merit ” Column) is of predominant significance in this connection as it shows the relative standing of institutions when judged by the results of the three crucial factors in workshop administration, namely :—

- (a) Average earnings of blind workers ;
- (b) Average output per head of each blind worker ;
- (c) Gross profit or loss.

7.—It is clear that an institution appearing at the head of the column is, on the whole, achieving better results than one which appears at the bottom of the column ; for the three factors, when taken together, constitute a measure by which the results of workshop administration can be gauged.

8.—If institutions occupying the higher places in Column 9 reveal a high ratio of sighted to blind, and if institutions lower down the column reveal a low ratio, there is *prima facie* reason to believe that the higher proportion of sighted workers is responsible for the better results obtained.

9.—This tendency is undoubtedly present as will be evident from a study of Appendix II.

The following observations will enable the figures in Appendix II to be understood with greater ease:—

COLUMN 1 shows the position of workshops.

COLUMN 2A shows the Key Letters of workshops having the highest ratio of sighted to blind—Column 2, Appendix I. Workshops having a high ratio occupy the top positions; those with decreasing ratios occupying lower positions.

COLUMN 2B shows the Key Letters of workshops which appear in the first, second, third, etc., places in the “Combined Order of Merit” Column—Column 9, Appendix I.

It will be seen how Key Letters tend to fall in respect of Columns 2A and 2B into the same group, *i.e.*, either at the top or at the bottom of Column 1, thus confirming the belief that the higher the ratio of sighted to blind, the better are the results obtained.

COLUMN 3 shows the average ratio of sighted to blind in those workshops which fall into the same group; it is on these average ratios that recommendations are primarily based.

10.—The question now arises whether the inferences made above can be used as a practical guide when staffing workshops for the blind. Local circumstances have always to be taken into account, but the conclusion may safely be drawn that certain ratios of sighted to blind can be applied as general principles in respect of each trade practised. These may be set out as follows:—

MAT DEPARTMENT.—Ratio of sighted to blind between 1—5 and 1—7 where sighted labour is employed for shearing, squaring, finishing lettered, insertion and wool bordered mats.

BRUSH DEPARTMENT.—Ratio of sighted to blind between 1—4 and 1—5 where sighted labour is employed for trimming, finishing, varnishing, branding, etc.

BASKET DEPARTMENT.—Ratio of sighted to blind between 1—5 and 1—8 where sighted labour is employed for sorting, picking, clogging, lettering, etc.

FLAT MACHINE KNITTING DEPARTMENT.—Ratio of sighted to blind between 1—1 and 1—3 according to the class of work engaged in, and where sighted persons are employed as fashioners, hand and machine finishers, and machine charge hands. The number of the latter will vary according to the type of machines in use, more charge hands being required for fine gauge and pattern machines.

BEDDING AND MATTRESS MAKING DEPARTMENT.—Ratio of sighted to blind between 1—4 and 1—6 where sighted labour is employed for mattress-case making, closing mouth of case when filled, cutting out material for mattress-cases, etc.

11.—It should be observed here that “Sighted labour” includes all sighted persons in a department who are in any way directly engaged on production, or in supervision incidental to production, or in any work customarily performed by sighted persons. It does not include the time of foremen or assistant foremen, which may be spent on general management, sales, costing, delivery, etc., neither does it include instructors engaged in teaching pupils.

NOTES

- (i) All information contained in this Report has been treated as confidential ; no indication can be given as to the identity of any institution.
- (ii) All figures have been taken in respect of the year ending 31st March, 1932.
- (iii) For the purpose of this Report five trades have been considered : Basket-making, brush-making, bedding, mat-making, and flat machine knitting. No information is at present available in respect of any other trade.
- (iv) Some institutions state that they have no sighted staff in certain departments. This means that the duties of foremen, assistant foremen, etc., are being performed by men having a large measure of sight. Such men are in effect being employed as sighted persons, even though they have been certified as blind, and are technically so regarded.
- (v) In the Appendices the institutions concerned have been sub-divided into two groups, according to the size of the departments. It was felt that the conditions prevailing in the large workshops were so different from those in the smaller workshops, that no reliable inferences could be drawn from any set of figures in which large and small were lumped together without distinction.
- (vi) No allowance has been made for any effect upon output, trading results, standard of work, etc.,

that might be the result of employing fully sighted persons as journeymen workers. The sighted staff of a department often includes such workers, which accounts for the high ratio of sighted to blind which often appears in Column 2, Appendix I.

(vii) In Appendix I, Column 4, output per head has been taken, in preference to sales per head, in the belief that output is more directly the result of supervision, and sales the result of management.

(viii) For the purpose of this Report, where blind men and women work in the same department, women have been regarded as equal to men in respect of output per head.

(ix) In almost every case it has been found impossible to obtain a separate set of figures in respect of the wire drawn and pan sections of the brush departments, and accordingly figures for the two classes of work have had to be merged.

(x) The present Report is in respect of workshops only. No material is available in respect of Home Workers Schemes.

Appendix I.

TABLE SHOWING APPARENT EFFECT ON WAGES, OUTPUT AND GROSS PROFIT OR LOSS OF THE EMPLOYMENT OF SIGHTED PERSONS IN THE
MAT DEPARTMENT
OF

(a) Institutions having 10 or more Blind Workers in Department.

(1) Key Letter.	(2) Ratio of Sighted to Blind Workers.	(3) Average weekly Earnings of Blind Workers when fully employed.	(4) Average Output per head of each Blind Worker.	(5) Gross Profit (+) or Loss (—) of Department.	(6) Order of Merit : Average Wages earned.	(7) Order of Merit : Output per head.	(8) Order of Merit : Gross Profit or Loss.	(9) " Com- bined " Order of Merit.
A	1—8.4	28/4	£134	— £1032	1	3	8	2
B	1—12	17/6	£69	— £252	7	6	7	5
C	1—3.3	26/6	£173	— £242	3	1	6	1
D	1—4.3	20/-	£147	+ £185	6	2	2	1
E	1—21.6	24/6	£31	+ £430	4	8	1	3
F	1—10	22/5	£118	— £52	5	4	3	2
G	1—13	16/6	£66	— £173	8	7	4	4
H	1—9.6	27/6	£77	— £208	2	5	5	2

(b) Institutions having under 10 Blind Workers in Department.

I	1—6	17/-	£111	— £73	8	6	6	5
J	1—8.6	16/9	£144	— £98	9	1	9	4
K	1—9	12/6	£93	— £96	11	9	8	8
L	Nil	14/-	£80	+ £34	10	11	3	7
M	1—8	18/-	£116	— £393	7	5	12	7
N	1—20	26/-	£106	— £295	3	7	11	6
O	1—10	30/-	£98	— £86	2	8	7	3
P	1—6	25/-	£142	— £177	4	2	10	2
Q	Nil	24/6	£84	— £41	5	10	5	5
R	1—10	30/8	£139	+ £42	1	3	2	1
S	1—4	10/6	£136	— £20	12	4	4	5
T	1—7	20/-	£78	+ £246	6	12	1	6

Appendix I.

TABLE SHOWING APPARENT EFFECT ON WAGES, OUTPUT AND GROSS PROFIT OR LOSS OF THE EMPLOYMENT OF SIGHTED PERSONS IN THE

BRUSH DEPARTMENT

OF

(a) Institutions having 20 or more Blind Workers in Department.

(1) Key Letter.	(2) Ratio of Sighted to Blind Workers	(3) Average weekly Earnings of Blind Workers when fully employed.	(4) Average Output per head of each Blind Worker.	(5) Gross Profit (+) or Loss (—) of Department.	(6) Order of Merit : Average Wages earned.	(7) Order of Merit : Output per head.	(8) Order of Merit : Gross Profit or Loss.	(9) " Com- bined " Order of Merit.
A	1—4.1	32/5	£235	— £618	1	2	6	2
B	1—7.6	27/8	£183	+ £110	4	3	5	4
C	1—3.5	27/—	£237	+ £1507	5	1	2	1
D	1—2.8	30/—	£180	+ £156	2	4	4	3
E	1—9.6	29/6	£169	+ £3460	3	5	1	2
F	1—12	23/9	£119	+ £789	6	6	3	5

(b) Institutions having under 20 Blind Workers in Department.

G	1—3	20/—	£236	+ £942	6	4	1	3
H	1—8	14/6	£160	— £38	7	7	8	7
I	1—3.6	39/2	£319	— £3	1	1	6	1
J	1—5	14/—	£161	+ £775	8	6	2	4
K	1—4.5	30/—	£252	+ £103	2	3	4	2
L	1—3.3	29/3	£141	— £843	3	8	9	6
M	1—3.5	24/—	£275	+ £601	4	2	3	2
N	1—18.7	11/1	£75	+ £4	9	9	5	8
O	1—4.6	23/5	£175	— £34	5	5	7	5

Appendix I.

TABLE SHOWING APPARENT EFFECT ON WAGES, OUTPUT
AND GROSS PROFIT OR LOSS OF THE EMPLOYMENT OF
SIGHTED PERSONS IN THE
BASKET DEPARTMENT
OF

(a) Institutions having 20 or more Blind Workers in Department.

(1) Key Letter.	(2) Ratio of Sighted to Blind Workers.	(3) Average weekly Earnings of Blind Workers when fully employed.	(4) Average Output per head of each Blind Worker.	(5) Gross Profit (+) or Loss (—) of Department.	(6) Order of Merit : Average Wages earned.	(7) Order of Merit : Output per head.	(8) Order of Merit : Gross Profit or Loss.	(9) " Com- bined " Order of Merit.
A	1—7.2	26/-	£76	— £571	3	8	9	7
B	1—12.8	8/-	£69	— £491	11	11	8	9
C	1—5	29/10	£149	+ £416	2	2	2	1
D	1—7.4	35/8	£158	— £650	1	1	10	2
E	1—14	23/10	£80	+ £510	7	7	1	3
F	1—8.4	14/-	£71	— £202	10	10	7	8
G	1—22	24/-	£71	— £32	6	9	4	6
H	1—4.2	17/10	£115	— £185	8	3	5	4
I	1—14	16/-	£92	+ £77	9	6	3	5
J	1—21	25/3	£111	— £1206	4	4	11	6
K	Nil	25/-	£100	— £195	5	5	6	4

(b) Institutions having under 20 Blind Workers in Department.

L	1—19	18/-	£70	+ £636	14	15	1	8
M	1—6.3	23/2	£108	— £311	6	5	16	5
N	1—6	20/-	£112	+ £179	8	4	2	2
O	1—11.3	24/6	£103	+ £3	4	8	8	3
P	Nil	15/-	£53	— £241	16	18	15	14
Q	1—8.5	19/9	£108	— £502	9	6	18	10
R	1—10	18/1	£80	+ £85	13	12	4	7
S	1—28	21/6	£61	+ £10	7	17	6	8
T	1—8.6	34/9	£153	+ £166	1	2	3	1
U	1—7.4	24/3	£75	— £119	5	14	11	8
V	1—2.4	30/-	£224	— £351	2	1	17	3*
W	1—12	19/6	£104	— £175	10	7	13	8
X	Nil	19/-	£69	— £71	11	16	10	12
Y	1—18.7	17/9	£89	+ £54	15	11	5	9
Z	1—4	10/6	£101	— £214	17	9	14	13
A 1	1—10	25/-	£77	— £20	3	13	9	4
A 2	1—8	18/6	£93	— £130	12	10	12	11
A 3	Nil	7/-	£127	+ £9	18	3	7	6

*Figures considered unreliable.

TABLE SHOWING APPARENT EFFECT ON WAGES, OUTPUT AND GROSS PROFIT OR LOSS OF THE EMPLOYMENT OF SIGHTED PERSONS IN THE

FLAT MACHINE KNITTING DEPARTMENT

OF

(a) Institutions having 15 or more Blind Workers in Department.

(1) Key Letter.	(2) Ratio of Sighted to Blind Workers.	(3) Average weekly Earnings of Blind Workers when fully employed.	(4) Average Output per head of each Blind Worker.	(5) Gross Profit (+) or Loss (—) of Department.	(6) Order of Merit : Average Wages earned.	(7) Order of Merit : Output per head.	(8) Order of Merit : Gross Profit or Loss.	(9) "Com- bined" Order of Merit.
A	1—1.4	16/5	£146	+ £39	4	2	7	4
B	1—0.85	20/-	£228	+ £260	1	1	5	1
C	1—2	8/6	£60	+ £325	8	8	4	6
D	1—1.3	16/6	£136	+ £2288	3	3	1	1
E	1—2.4	17/-	£99	+ £475	2	5	2	2
F	1—3.75	10/6	£83	— £55	7	6	8	7
G	1—2.1	14/-	£118	+ £437	5	4	3	3
H	1—4.35	12/6	£69	+ £174	6	7	6	5

(b) Institutions having under 15 Blind Workers in Department.

I	1—2.5	6/-	£62	— £10	10	9	5	8
J	1—3.7	8/6	£78	— £223	6	7	8	7
K	1—6	7/9	£87	— £27	9	5	7	7
L	1—1.6	12/7	£179	— £240	3	1	9	3
M	1—3.6	9/-	£88	— £303	7	4	10	7
N	Nil	15/-	£65	— £16	1	8	6	5
O	1—3	8/-	£90	+ £371	8	3	1	2
P	1—2.6	10/6	£86	+ £194	5	6	3	4
Q	Nil	11/3	£61	+ £29	4	10	4	6
R	1—2.3	13/11	£112	+ £369	2	2	2	1

Appendix I.

TABLE SHOWING APPARENT EFFECT ON WAGES, OUTPUT AND GROSS PROFIT OR LOSS OF THE EMPLOYMENT OF SIGHTED PERSONS IN THE
BEDDING DEPARTMENT.

(1) Key Letter.	(2) Ratio of Sighted to Blind Workers.	(3) Average weekly Earnings of Blind Workers when fully employed.	(4) Average Output per head of each Blind Worker.	(5) Gross Profit (+) or Loss (—) of Department.	(6) Order of Merit : Average Wages earned.	(7) Order of Merit : Output per head.	(8) Order of Merit : Gross Profit or Loss.	(9) "Com- bined" Order of Merit.
A	1—7.6	51/10	£349	+ £2400	1	2	1	1
B	1—3	36/3	£342*	+ £115	3	3*	4	3
C	1—6	30/-	£266	+ £436	4	4	3	4
D	1—5	41/-	£418*	+ £856	2	1*	2	2
E	1—7.5	29/6	£178	+ £82	5	5	5	5
F	1—9	21/3	£109	— £32	6	6	6	6

*Mattress Covers not made at the Institution.

Appendix II.

TABLE SHOWING THE GROUPING
OF INSTITUTIONS IN THE
MAT DEPARTMENT

(a) Large Institutions.

(1) Position.	(2A) KEY LETTERS OF INSTITUTIONS OCCUPYING THE SAME POSITION IN :—		(3) Average Ratio of those Institutions which fall into the same Group.
	Ratio of Sighted to Blind Column. (Column No. 2)	Order of Merit Column. (Column No. 9)	
1	C	C	
2	D	D	
3	A	A	1 — 5.3
4	H	F	
5	F	H	
6	B	E	
7	G	G	1 — 15.5
8	E	B	
(b) Small Institutions.			
1	S	R	
2	P	P	
3	I	O	
4	T	J	1 — 6.8
5	M	I	
6	J	Q	
7	K	S	
8	O	N	
9	R	T	
10	N	L	1 — 14.5
11	L	M	
12	Q	K	

Appendix II.

TABLE SHOWING THE GROUPING
OF INSTITUTIONS IN THE
BRUSH DEPARTMENT
OF
(a) Large Institutions.

(1) Position.	(2A) KEY LETTERS OF INSTITUTIONS OCCUPYING THE SAME POSITION IN :— Ratio of Sighted to Blind Column. (Column No. 2)	(2B) Order of Merit Column. (Column No. 9)	(3) Average Ratio of those Institutions which fall into the same Group.
1	C }	D }	
2	A }	C }	1 — 3.8
3	E }	A }	
4	D }	D }	
5	B }	E }	1 — 9.8
6	F }	F }	
(b) Small Institutions.			
1	G }	I }	
2	L }	K }	
3	M }	M }	1 — 4.8
4	I }	G }	
5	K }	J }	
6	O }	O }	
7	J }	L }	
8	H }	H }	1 — 10.4
9	N }	N }	

Appendix II.

TABLE SHOWING THE GROUPING
OF INSTITUTIONS IN THE
BASKET DEPARTMENT

OF
(a) Large Institutions.

(1) Position.	(2A) KEY LETTERS OF INSTITUTIONS OCCUPYING THE SAME POSITION IN :—		(3) Average Ratio of those Institutions which fall into the same Group.
	Ratio of Sighted to Blind Column. (Column No. 2)	Order of Merit Column. (Column No. 9)	
1	H	C	
2	C	D	
3	A	E	1 — 5.5
4	D	H	
5	F	K	
6	B	I	
7	E	G	
8	I	J	1 — 15.6
9	J	A	
10	G	F	
11	K	B	
(b) Small Institutions.			
1	V	T	
2	Z	N	
3	N	O	
4	M	V	
5	U	A 1	1 — 8
6	A 2	M	
7	Q	A 3	
8	T	R	
9	R	L	
10	A 1	S	
11	O	U	
12	W	W	
13	Y	Y	
14	L	Q	1 — 17.6
15	S	A 2	
16	X	X	
17	A 3	Z	
18	P	P	

Appendix II.

TABLE SHOWING THE GROUPING
OF INSTITUTIONS IN THE
FLAT MACHINE KNITTING DEPARTMENT
OF
(a) Large Institutions.

Appendix II.

TABLE SHOWING THE GROUPING
OF INSTITUTIONS IN THE
BEDDING DEPARTMENT

(1)	(2A)	(2B)	(3)
Position.	KEY LETTERS OF INSTITUTIONS OCCUPYING THE SAME POSITION IN :—		Average Ratio of those Institutions which fall into the same Group.
	Ratio of Sighted to Blind Column. (Column No. 2)	Order of Merit Column. (Column No. 9)	
1	B	A	
2	D	D	1 — 4
3	C } 3	B } Group 1	
4	E	C	
5	A } 5	E } Group 2	1 — 8.2
6	F	F	

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